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A PERILOUS BUSINESS AND THE REMEDY.

BY THE HON. HENRY CABOT LODGE, REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM MASSACHUSETTS.

WHEN Burns wrote his famous lines,

“Man’s inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn,”

he probably had in mind only that direct inhumanity which is unfortunately but too well known, and which has been the source of so much grief in the world. Yet there is a kind of inhumanity, indirect and unintentional, certainly much less obvious than that of the familiar verse, which is nevertheless the cause of almost as much suffering. The failure of Congress to act in the case of the trainmen is an instance of this latter sort. Three times has the President of the United States asked Congress to do something to protect the lives of trainmen by securing uniformity in couplers and the adoption of train brakes on freight trains. A committee of the Senate has held an extensive hearing upon the subject. The Railroad Commissioners of the country in their national convention have discussed the question, and appointed a special committee, with Mr. Crocker, of Massachusetts, at its head, to secure action. Yet Congress has done nothing. It would be going too far to say that nothing has been accomplished, for the efforts of the Railroad Commissioners have awakened public interest and to a certain extent formed public opinion. But the body which has the power to actually do something effective has not yet stirred. This inaction is inhumanity, unintentional and thoughtless no doubt, but none the less the cause of many deaths, of much pain, and of widespread suffering, which might be mitigated, if not stopped, by intelligent legislation.

I desire here to state the case briefly, merely bringing figures and facts together in such fashion that they shall tell their story, and, if possible, help forward the work of proper legislation. The

story is a simple one, and any one who will take the trouble to read the figures will, I think, be convinced that something practical ought to be done and done quickly.

The following table gives all the really essential facts :

Kind of accident.	1890.		1889.	
	Killed.	Injured.	Killed.	Injured.
Coupling and uncoupling	369	7,841	300	6,757
Falling from trains and engines	557	2,348	493	2,011
Overhead obstructions.....	89	343	65	296
Collisions.....	236	1,035	167	820
Derailements.....	150	720	125	655
Other train accidents	154	894	189	1,016
At highway crossings.....	22	32	24	45
At stations.....	98	691	70	699
Other causes.....	749	8,250	539	7,729
Unclassified.....	27	236
Total	2,451	22,390	1,972	20,028

The totals in these tables are really appalling : 22,000 men were killed and injured in the railroad service of the United States in 1889, and 25,000 in the following year. Of these, in round numbers, 2,000 were killed in 1889 and 2,500 in 1890.

Let me try now by a comparison to bring home what these figures mean. At the battle of Sedan, which sealed the fate of the Second Empire, the loss on both sides in killed and wounded was a trifle more than the killed and wounded among our trainmen last year. At Gravelotte, where the loss was heaviest in the Franco-Prussian War, the Germans lost 20,577 men. Wellington won Waterloo and Meade Gettysburg with a loss of 23,185 and 23,003 respectively, and the total loss on both sides at Shiloh in two days' murderous fighting did not reach 24,000. These were all great battles. They decided the fate of nations and were fought bravely and obstinately with the purpose of destroying human life. Yet the winner's loss and sometimes the loss of both victor and vanquished never equalled the loss in killed and wounded suffered by our trainmen in the pursuit of a peaceful calling during a single year. I think these figures from a few battles show in a very striking manner what a terrible loss of human life and what a frightful maiming of human bodies, with all the consequent suffering, occur among the trainmen of the country.

The proportion of killed to wounded is larger in battle than in the case of the trainmen, but the chief difference in these

figures is that the losses in battle were concentrated into a few hours. So it happens that while we glow or shudder over a battle, with its heroism and its slaughter, the trainmen picked off or maimed one by one do not strike our imaginations. Of course the percentage of killed and wounded in battle, as compared with the numbers engaged, is greater than the percentage of killed and wounded on trains compared with the numbers employed. But the object of soldiers in battle is to kill and wound. They are there for that purpose. The object of trainmen is to carry on safely the railway traffic of a great country. Yet they suffer as if they were fighting a war, and the percentage of loss to numbers employed, if not so high as with soldiers, is frightful enough. For the year ending June 30, 1889, among all railroad employees there was one death for every 357 and one injury for every 35, while amongst trainmen alone there was one death for every 117 and one injury for every 12.* For the year ending June 30, 1890, the secretary of the Inter-State Commission, Mr. Moseley, informs me that for all employees there was one death for every 306 and one injury for every 33 men employed.

If nothing can be done to lessen the dangers which bring such results, it is only possible to regret deeply that so much suffering and death among vigorous men should be necessary in order to carry on the business of transportation ; but if anything can be done to lessen them, it is little short of criminal not to do it. That improvement is possible is shown at once by the fact that in England there is among all employees only one death for every 875 and one injury for every 158 men employed. Such evidence, however, is really needless, for every one who has considered the subject at all knows that a great deal can be done to stop this killing and maiming in at least two directions — the coupling of cars and the braking of freight trains. It will be observed by examining the table already given that to these two causes 37 per cent. of the deaths and 45 per cent. of the injuries recorded are due, so that anything which cuts off these two sources of danger would largely reduce the total losses of life and limb.

How, then, is it to be done ? The accidents under the first head now arise for the most part from the use of what is known as the old link-and-pin coupling. What is desired is to replace the old system with uniform automatic safety couplers or draw-

* "Statistics Railways of United States," 1889, p. 37.

bars. Two conditions are absolutely necessary for improvement —safety couplers and uniformity in their use. At the hearing before the Senate committee representatives of various railroad systems spoke. They opposed legislation on the ground that the movement towards the uniform safety coupler was going on as rapidly as possible by the action of the railroads themselves ; that the requirement of a given type of coupler would lead to the establishment of some single patent and the consequent advance in its price, and that, in any event, an act of Congress would put the railroads to heavy expenses, and was not required.

There is no reason to suppose that the managers of the railroads are not as anxious as any one else, from motives both of economy and of humanity, to check the frightful loss of life and limb arising from the two causes which have been mentioned. The able management of great roads, like the Pennsylvania and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy, as was shown at the hearing, are now doing everything in their power upon their own lines to secure protection for their trainmen in the matter of couplers. Mr. Haines, president of the American Railway Association, said also at a meeting of the committee of the commissioners in New York, last November, that our railroads are at this moment making a wider application of safety appliances than is the case in Europe. I think this is perfectly true, despite the fact that the English Board of Trade during the past summer have issued orders defining and requiring train brakes on freight trains, and that the percentage of loss of life and limb is less in England than with us. Yet, after conceding to the railroad management of the country all that is claimed in the way of humanity and progress, it seems clear that their objections to legislation of a proper kind are not valid.

When the committee of the commissioners was appointed last March, it issued a set of inquiries to presidents of different railroads designed to elicit information on the matter of couplers. The results of this inquiry are condensed and tabulated in the following report made by Mr. E. A. Moseley, the secretary of the Inter-State-Commerce Commission, who is an expert on this subject, and were presented by him to the committee of the commissioners at its November meeting :

“The following is a summary of the replies received from the presidents of the different railroads in answer to the circular sent them regarding

equipment. The replies in many cases are very vague and incomplete, but the following is as a clear statement as could be made of them.

"The total number of freight cars owned, leased, or controlled, 978,161. The total number equipped with automatic couplers, 129,304. The number of couplers used and the number of cars equipped with each, as well as could be prepared, is as follows: Of the M. C. B. type : Janney, 40,231; Gould, 23,357; Hinson, 42,081; designated simply M. C. B., 13,279. Of the Safford type there are reported 12,207, and couplers specified other than those named, 38,965.

"Owing to the imperfect manner in which the replies were made, we cannot tell whether the sum of the differences between the totals above mentioned of cars equipped with different couplers—190,090—and the total number of freight cars owned, leased, or controlled, viz., 978,161, would make the number having the link and pin 788,071; but this is the only conclusion which can be reached from the data furnished, as many of the replies state that they have no automatic couplers; and where they have done so, and have not indicated any other couplers used, we have concluded that the link-and-pin was the one in use.

"Of the total number of cars reported, 110,127 are equipped with train brakes as follows: Westinghouse, 97,238; Eames, 30; Boyden, 304; other types, 12,555. The balance of the cars, we conclude, are equipped with hand brakes only, as there is nothing to show to the contrary.

"The number of locomotives owned, leased, or controlled is 27,159, of which 17,000 are shown to be equipped with driving-wheel brakes.

"The replies to the question regarding the best means of bringing about uniformity in safety car-couplers are not at all clear in many cases, but the following is a statement which has been prepared, showing as nearly as possible the position of the roads :

"Sixty-nine roads, representing 13,014.24 miles of road operated, are in favor of national legislation; eighty-eight roads, representing 46,791.09 miles of road operated, are in favor of voluntary action by the railroads; two roads, representing 139.09 miles of road operated, are in favor of State legislation; seventeen roads, representing 11,915.88 miles of road operated, are in favor of the M. C. B. type of coupler; ten roads, representing 4,829.83 miles of road operated, are in favor of different couplers; fifteen roads, representing 9,407.79 miles of road operated, express the opinion that the matter is still in the experimental stage, while 145 roads, representing 38,985.59 miles of road operated, have expressed no opinion in regard to the best means of bringing about uniformity in automatic couplers."

"A number of the roads in favor of voluntary action and some of those which are silent in relation to the best means of bringing about uniformity in automatic couplers have shown a preference for the M. C. B. type.

"The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railroad Company and its auxiliary lines, together with one other road, expressed themselves in favor of the Safford coupler."

This report shows what might have been expected—that, however well-intentioned the railroads, it is not possible for them by their own unaided efforts to obtain any uniformity of action on this subject within any reasonable time. Still less is it within the power of the separate States to obtain it. Freight cars belonging to different companies are scattered all over the country. They can be reached only by a legislation of equal extent.

In other words, to obtain uniformity in freight couplers we must invoke the law of the United States.

The question of what couplers should be used, about which there has been, perhaps, more discussion than about anything else, is in reality secondary. Some type, that of the master car-builders or some other, could easily be agreed upon by the railroads, if it was once fixed by law that they must have some kind of uniform safety couplers. The main thing is uniformity, for where cars having the old link and pin have to be coupled with others having safety couplers, the danger is increased instead of diminished, as the advancing rate of loss from 1889 to 1890 painfully shows.

What we want, therefore, is an act requiring the adoption of uniform safety couplers by the railroads throughout the country. A reasonable time should be given to enable the roads to make this change, and they ought to have at least five and perhaps ten years, which is the average life of a freight car, to complete it. Then at the expiration of the time fixed by law the use of uniform safety couplers ought to be compelled under penalty.

The question of a type could be left to the railroads themselves, for when the railroads found that they would be forced under penalties to have uniform safety couplers, they would soon agree on the best and cheapest kind. If they did not, further legislation on this point could be easily obtained, vesting the necessary authority in the Inter-State-Commerce Commission.

As to the other prolific source of casualties, hand brakes on freight trains, the case is simpler. The heading in the statistics describes these accidents as "falling from trains," which occurs almost wholly on freight trains where the brakeman is required to pass along the top of the cars and to climb to and from the roofs in order to reach the brakes. The danger of this work is obvious. Running along the roof of a moving car by night, with the boards covered perhaps with ice or snow, in the midst of storms and darkness, which hide from sight the coming bridge, it is little wonder that so many meet death in the performance of this duty. In this case all that is required is to follow the directions of the English Board of Trade defining and requiring train brakes which are worked automatically from the engine, and with which we are already thoroughly familiar in our passenger service.

The case is such a plain one that it hardly seems to need argu-

ment. No possible political feeling can be involved in it, and no very complicated legislation is required to bring about the desired result without placing a ruinous expense on the railroads. It is simple inhumanity not to take prompt action. The total number of killed and wounded is increasing from year to year, and so is the proportion of loss to the total number of men employed. Uniformity in the use of safety appliances and of train brakes on our freight trains will save hundreds of lives, stop the maiming of thousands of men, and preserve the bread-winners to thousands of families. Such uniformity can be obtained only by legislation which will reach into every State and every territory. The Congress of the United States alone has the power to pass such legislation, and it is high time that the power was exerted.

HENRY CABOT LODGE.